



## Status of Motorized Watercraft in Grand Canyon National Park

Since the 1950s, motorized watercraft have been used on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park. This originally included upriver travel, which is now illegal above Separation Canyon (river mile 240). Since the early 1970s the National Park Service (NPS) has allowed commercial river companies to use motors through contractual agreements.

The first Colorado River Management Plan, approved in 1979, provided for the phase out of motor use. The Hatch Amendment to the 1981 Department of Interior (DOI) Appropriations Bill prohibited the NPS from using any funds appropriated in that year to reduce the use of motors on the river by outfitters. This resulted in the abandonment of the plan. The plan was revised in 1981 and provided for continued motorized use and an increase in recreational user days. Currently about 77% of commercial passengers and 10% of private trips use motorized craft.

Policy and Regulations regarding use of motors in Grand Canyon National Park:

- Only “Quiet Technology” four- stroke engines are permitted on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon National Park.
- Maximum horsepower allowed is 55.
- Motors are not allowed to launch between September 16 and December 15.
- Upriver travel of the Colorado River is not allowed above Separation Canyon (RM 240).
- The use of personal watercraft (PWCs) is prohibited in Grand Canyon National Park.
- Commercial companies that conduct both oar and motorized trips are allowed to change the percentage of trips using motors without contacting the NPS.
- Commercial companies that use motors are allowed to switch over to oars without contacting the NPS.
- Commercial companies that do not use motors are not allowed to switch to motorized trips.
- All motorized vessels must meet state and Coast Guard requirements.
- All administrative trips (patrol, research, Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center, etc.) must use the “minimum requirement analysis”—a documented process to determine if administrative activities affecting wilderness resources or the visitor experience are necessary, and how to minimize the impacts of those activities.

National Park Service Management Policy 6 requires that “potential wilderness” be managed as designated wilderness. Legal and policy analysis conducted by the DOI Solicitor’s Office determined that the NPS can continue to allow motorized use on the river under its general Organic Act regulatory authority without jeopardizing wilderness suitability.